

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,  
Illinois Central Railroad Passenger Depot  
Iowa and Jones Streets  
Dubuque  
Dubuque County  
Iowa

HABS No. IA-160-A

HABS  
Iowa,  
31-DUBU,  
13-A-

DRAWINGS

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

# Illinois Central Railroad Passenger Depot

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Site Location: Iowa and Jones Streets  
Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa  
DOT designation: Resource Site No. 1A.1, 1A.1b-1f  
Cadastral grid : NE1/4 SE1/4 S25 T89N R3E  
USGS quadrangle: Dubuque South Iowa 7.5'  
UTM coordinates: 15.692160.4706940  
Lot dimensions : 112' x 643': 1.65 acres  
Lot description: East 1/2 of Lot 10 of Block 1 of  
Dubuque Harbor Company Addition.

Present Owner: L & I Building Company  
Present Usage: vacant  
Present Condition : good

Overall Dimensions: 169' x 56'; 1 story

Orientation : east

Architectural

Description :

Plan type : rectangular, with slight projections on long sides, one story.

Foundation: poured in-place concrete perimeter walls.

Structure : wood frame with brick masonry bearing walls.

Ext. walls: face brick laid in running bond.

Roof : Flat composition roof with brick parapets and concrete coping.

Chimneys : none

Windows : windows in projection with either double or triple columns of six horizontal lights, some double hung; several smaller windows on east side, each with 3 horizontal lights; on the south side, the windows have similar horizontal lights, usually having 6, although on the right is a smaller window with 4 lights; on the west side are paired and singled horizontal 6 light, double hung. Between the projections are similar windows, and also smaller single windows with only three horizontal lights. Only two window openings are visible on the north side; these have been boarded up, but they are the same size as the 6 light windows on other walls. All the windows have concrete lug sills and loose lintels with soldier brick heads forming a continuous band around building.

Openings : single-leaf main entrance with 2-light transom on east front; there is a similar door in the last bay of this wall; between the projections are two garage doors; on the west wall single

doors are placed opposite those on the east side, and there are two others in the area between the projections. Also in this area are three garage doors. There are two single doors, one with a transom on the south elevation.

Details : pedimented parapets with continuous concrete copings; decorative drain pipes which emerge from round arched brick wall openings. ILLINOIS CENTRAL in cast concrete panel on north wall.

Construction Date : 1887-88; 1945

Architecture Style: Gothic Revival (original); Twentieth Century Functional (current)

Physical History : From as early as 1836, Dubuque citizens were concerned about establishing their city as a railroad connection to augment the growth and prosperity of the town. Galena, Illinois, and Dubuque then competed in pursuing railroad establishment. In 1850-1851 the Chicago and Galena Union Railway and the Illinois Central Railway were both expanding new routes westward toward the two cities, but it was uncertain whether or not they would eventually reach Dubuque. Despite efforts by Galena to block it, the Illinois Central reached Dunleith (now called East Dubuque) across the Mississippi River from Dubuque in 1855, as indicated by a local account: "On the 2nd of June, 1855 the first train over the road reached Dubuque, after encountering some opposition in Galena from a spike driven into the center of the track by envious citizens of that municipality, and on July 18 thereafter, a public celebration of the formal opening of the road to Dubuque was had in this city."

Granted a charter on November 24, 1856, the Dubuque and Pacific Railroad (later renamed the Dubuque and Sioux City [D&SCRR]) was leased by the Illinois Central before the larger rail company acquired it outright in 1867. The ICRR built a brick freight house [HABS No. IA-160-G] alongside its tracks near First and Iowa Streets in 1873, and the railroad made constant improvements to its lines and facilities around Dubuque in subsequent years. When the Illinois Central planned a substantial new passenger depot in 1887, the city required the company to build on the land south of First and Jones streets, which had been granted to the D&SCRR for a passenger depot years before.

This raised the ire of Dubuque citizens, who favored construction of a union depot further north, preferably between Third and Fourth streets. This site was thought to be more convenient and more conducive for generating business by travelers stopping in Dubuque and since costs could be shared, the railroads would construct a more elaborate depot. The *Dubuque Daily Times* speculated that the Chicago, Burlington and Northern Railroad and Minnesota and Northwestern Railroad would be amenable to the plan, but the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, which had completed its own depot [HABS No. IA-160-0]

in 1882 near the proposed union depot site, would refuse to participate in the joint venture. The opposition quickly dissipated, however, in the face of the Illinois Central's plans to go ahead with its own depot. "It will be a structure that Dubuque will not be ashamed of," the *Times* reported in May, damning it with faint praise.

Completed in 1888 for the reported cost of \$85,000, the two-story depot featured ornate Gothic Revival detailing, with an immense 75'-tall mansard-roofed clock tower on the north end. The windows and doors were framed with continuous stone lintels and sills or round-headed arches made of alternating colored stones. Two sets of cross gables extended into a full-length pavilion at trackside, and the roof was punctuated by a central frame cupola and four sets of smaller gables, two of which had stained glass oculus windows. The depot was organized typically, with the ticket office and waiting room in the north half of the first floor, separated from the expressage room by a large baggage room. The second floor housed railroad offices and a commercial hotel.

The ICRR passenger depot functioned largely unaltered until World War II. In 1945, the railroad changed the building substantially for the reported cost of \$116,420. It is unclear whether the original structure was massively renovated or demolished completely and a new building constructed. Physical evidence suggests the latter. The current, plain-faced depot bears little resemblance to its predecessor other than a similarity of building footprint.

**Significance:** The Illinois Central Railroad has clearly been the most important rail carrier to serve Dubuque. Although built as the second passenger depot on the site in 1945, this structure is historically significant for its association with the railroad as the ICRR's most prominent building in the city.

**References:** Dubuque City Directories: 1857 - 1970.  
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*Dubuque Daily Times*: 24, 25, 27, 28 May 1887.  
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*Railway Age*: 5 January 1946.

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